



## Christmas as a Home Influence.

HERE is one thought which comes at Christmas-time with special sacredness to those who love the home and believe that in its purity lies the surest hope for our country's prosperity.

When our Saviour came to dwell with us He did not first appear as a man of sorrows or a prophet. He did not come, as He might have done, independent of the father and mother, a preacher equipped for His brief ministry. He came a helpless babe into a family—rather by His coming making a family which should be to all time a sacred ideal, a holy family. It is right that when we think of the stable at Bethlehem or the peasant dwelling in Nazareth we should be most intent on the central figure, the Divine Infant, the obedient Youth, but the glory of the Holy Child illumines the entire dwelling; and by thus condescending to enter a humble home God forever sets His seal of honor upon the family.

So, even more than as a church festival, we should observe Christmas with heartiness and with a devout spirit in our homes. It should be a time for laying aside carping cares, for the return of absent children and for those affectionate communications which even between parents and child, brother and sister, are too seldom cultivated in our hurried life.

Our time is cumbered with social engagements and with varying and unnecessary cares of the house, and as the Christmas time approaches life grows all the harder because of our burdens of stitching and of shopping. We wear ourselves out in efforts for novelty seeking, not for something which shall satisfy our own pride.

In the holy family into which the Christ-child truly comes the father's mind is not so full of sordid cares as to lead him to forget that his wife and his children have a right to him, as well as to what he can do and can get for them. He seizes, for it must be seized with violence from the grasping world, some leisure to consider the real needs of his dear ones, not those minor ones of delicate food and fine raiment, but the heart-hungry, the aspirations, which it is his privilege to sympathize with, if he cannot fully satisfy. In assisting His foster father at the carpenter's bench; while they work together, talking, we may fancy that Joseph's heart was often stirred, as many another parent's is to-day, by unexpected words of real wisdom and the surprising expressions of a profound spiritual insight. Is it not possible that in those communications at home the youth received quite as much of his education as he did from the "parish pedagogue" or the teachings in the synagogue? Children absorb much more than we think, and fathers in their conversation at the table and around the evening lamp are forming the opinions of their sons, and shaping their lives by unconscious influences. A little more thought given to the unspoken questionings of children, a little more watchfulness to respond to unuttered wonderings, a little more readiness to be a sympathizing confidant—would not this be a Christmas gift which our father might well bestow upon his boys and girls; would not such relations established between them be of uncounted value?

In this holy family the mother is not too much cumbered with serving. She has time to ponder the things concerning the higher life of her children. She does not forget the guest while she elaborates the feast, nor smother the babe in the adornments of the cradle. To fill the windows with holy wreaths, to bring the huge Yule log and light it on the hearth, will not make a Christmas. There is a beautiful legend which tells of the tarrying of the wise men at a peasant's door as they were on their way to Bethlehem, and their invitation to the mother and her children to accompany them in their visit to the Holy Babe. The mother promised to follow the wise men when she should have made necessary preparations, and through the busy day the children's eager pleadings "When may we go, when may we go?" and "May we touch his pretty head?" and "May we kiss his pretty feet?" interrupted her household tasks. We can imagine her furrowed brow as she answered with petulance: "Alas, I have so much to do."

In our holy family the children have imbibed the Christmas spirit. One child is not afraid another will have more and better gifts. The older ones are not "bothered" by the interruptions of the younger ones, but lend their larger knowledge readily and without stint. It is said that in the great English University of Cambridge there was a time, three hundred years



## "Rich Gifts Wax Poor When Givers Prove Unkind."

### Good Things Women Have Done This Week.

ago, when "the heads" solemnly debated the question of depriving the students of the liberty to which they had at Christmas time been accustomed. But it was finally decided by the governors that the holidays "were of good use, because thereby in twelve days they more discovered the dispositions of scholars than in twelve months before." A group of children gathered around a Christmas tree to-day or peering into the full stockings by the fireside on Christmas morning do also betray their "dispositions"—the good will be shown as much as the evil.

A charming way to begin Christmas Day is to have the household early awakened by the little children singing carols.

At breakfast some simple and pretty surprises may be tucked in the folds of the napkin or under the plate—a bit of original verse or a trifle having a humorous aptness. At family prayers Phillips Brooks's beautiful carol:

"Oh! little town of Bethlehem."

may be sung, and the story of the manger read. Afterward some of the children may accompany their father on a round of inquiry for sick persons and calls upon needy neighbors. Happy is the family when all agree to go to church together. Perhaps it may be the only time in the year when, as a family, they go to the house of God. On the way home some lonely person may be found to sit at the dinner table in the place already planned by the house mother for "an unknown guest." In the evening, when the gifts have been distributed in such manner as ingenuity or custom dictates, may fittingly come those old-fashioned, merry games in which both old and young can join, and which seem to bring age and youth into congenial comradeship.

Mrs. A. R. Van Nest gave a Thanksgiving check of \$5,000 to the building fund of the Peabody Home. Miss Sadie Norman, of Merie, Texas, saved her mother's life by shooting a snake. Kate Hill, the blind pianist, has made a will leaving her fortune to the Brooklyn Home for Blind Women. Mrs. J. S. Bird began work in the slums of New York to relieve distress. Mrs. Rose Hawthorne Lathrop treated many poor East Side women at her hospital on the East Side. Mrs. Parsons, No. 535 Fifth avenue, began work to help financially the Bryson Day Nursery. Mrs. Elizabeth Fogg left by will \$10,000 to various charitable institutions. Mrs. John S. Dent, of Chicago, provided a new home for a family that had been made penniless by a fire. Annie Besant began raising funds to relieve famine sufferers in India. The Cuban Society of Women gave a benefit to raise money for the relief of wounded Cuban soldiers. Mrs. J. S. Roberts, of St. Louis, left \$10,000 to various orphan asylums. The Girls' Charity Society for relief in the tenements gave a fair to raise money for carrying on the work. Miss Louise Ulrich, of Brooklyn, saved a little girl from being run over by a trolley car. Miss Ellen Casey, of Salem, saved the life of a fellow working-girl whose dress was caught in a revolving shaft. Amy Levy, of Philadelphia, put out a fire kindled by a little sister, and saved the household at the peril of her life. Miss Susan Hearden discovered an absent neighbor's son sick with typhoid fever, and nursed him till recovered. Miss Helen Gould had a woman who was run over carried to her own residence, where she nursed her until physicians came.

A day spent like this will be remembered when the children are scattered far and wide. They will always associate the love of father and mother with the blessed Christmas story, and who can tell what power to restrain from evil and inspire to good will be to them this memory of Christmas at home?

*Mrs. Lyman Abbott*

### "Kissmas" Morning.

LITTLE Katie does not know why, without word of warning, I should kiss—and kiss her so—Why? 'Tis "Kissmas" morning!

Katie, this remember well, And my lesson don't be eorning, There's no sure way to tell Love on "Kissmas" morning.

## SHOULD WOMEN TEACH THEIR CHILDREN TO BELIEVE IN SANTA CLAUS?

MRS. WILLIAM TOD HELMUTH

THOROUGHLY believe in old-fashioned ideas, and I don't think I should like to destroy the idea of Santa Claus, because it sustains all that is beautiful and delightful to children.

I would not on any account have my little granddaughter lose her faith in this delightful delusion. We have enough of the stern, hard realities of life—they come quickly enough—and I do not wish to destroy the pretty illusions of childhood, and the idea of Santa Claus is undoubtedly one of the most engaging and amusing of the pretty fancies of children.

I am a real old-fashioned woman, even if I am the president of Sorosis.

We (Sorosis) had a discussion on the subject of fairy tales and the fictions taught to children, some little time ago, and most of us were decidedly in favor of maintaining the stories and the legend of Santa Claus. I certainly favor the continuation of the idea, as it cultivates the imagination generally, and that should be encouraged more than it is in America.

You see, in the first place, America is so young a country, and everybody has always been in such a hurry that we have had but little time to spend in thought of anything save the realities of life. But we are becoming more settled now, and as time goes on will realize more and more that if we are to have poets, painters and literateurs we must cultivate the ideal and give more rein to the imagination.

Yes, my little grandchild, Gladys, will hang up her stocking in the old-fashioned way, and she has written a carefully worded letter to Santa Claus informing him that in case he should not find the door large enough to enter with the blackboard and other gifts she hopes for, she will leave it open.

ELIZABETH CADY STANTON

THE legend of St. Nicholas is a very nice one when confined to the story of the white-haired, pleasant old man with his sleigh loaded with beautiful presents for good children, and drawn over the snow by a team of reindeer, but so many parents spoil its beauty by telling the children that Santa Claus must not be seen or he won't leave any gifts for them.

The little ones naturally get very excited at the prospect of his bringing the presents, and, as a consequence, little inclined to sleep. Then the parents make the great mistake of trying to make them sleep by insisting into their minds a sense of fear. We are all creatures full of imagination, and I think it is a wicked thing to play on childish fears; therefore I have come to the conclusion that we had better tell them the truth.

It's a shame to try and make children good by playing on their imaginations, and making them fearful. When I think how much I suffered in my childhood from believing in the many terrifying things that were told me, I believe that the best thing to do is to tell children the whole truth. Then, too, there are many very nice fairy tales which will bring beautiful pictures to their imagination and leave nothing but pleasant recollections. I have come to the conclusion that fear is the most crippling thing you can use in training a child, and by making a child fearful of seeing Santa Claus people will turn it into a period of fear rather than pleasure.

I never told my children about St. Nicholas bringing presents to them. At Christmas time I used to say to them: "What would you most like to have?" and they would say just what they wanted, or we would go together to see the toys at the stores and buy those they liked best. I always inclined to tell the children the truth and not deceive them in any way.

It was my custom to put their presents in separate parcels on my piano, and there they found them when they came down to breakfast on Christmas morning.

MRS. JOSEPHINE SHAW

DON'T believe in telling untruths of any kind to children. I think the story of Santa Claus is a very interesting one to relate to children, but they should be told that it is a legend and not true. Hanging up the stockings to receive the gifts is very amusing, and that method of presenting gifts is perfectly harmless. Placing the gifts on the Christmas tree is also a good way and one of which I thoroughly approve.

Anything that is merry and innocent and truthful is good for children. Fairy tales are not an unmixed evil, but children should be taught that they are fairy tales. They soon learn to tell the difference between "honest and true" stories and "make believe." Santa Claus is a "make believe"—a human-hearted, picturesque "make believe," but still a "make believe." I should teach my children to know that. Children are more shrewd than many grown people think. They all think over little things, and they judge us for them and by them.

In course of time they are bound to learn the true character of Santa Claus, and the legend becomes one of the first of the hundreds of "untruths" in life to which their young eyes are opened. It thus in a measure helps to emphasize in their minds the idea of deception in this world. The lesson is placed before them in a specially tempting way when they see those they most love taking part in it.

People say that in taking away the belief in Santa Claus you take away a beautiful part of a child's life. I do not see why a child should not know, and be glad to know, that his parents are thinking of him and planning for him and loving him. I do not know why he should be disappointed to discover that his mother loved him so much that she trimmed a beautiful tree for him, and that he was so dear to his father that the things on the tree were bought.

For the rest, I do not tell lies to my children. I hope I never shall.

MRS. WILLIAM WILSON

IF all the little fictions, fairy tales and fancies dear to children were to be given up, what would become of the imaginations of the coming generation? We have been called a practical people. So we are. If anything, too practical. As we grow older the realities of life crowd thick and fast upon us. Why then seek to destroy one of the most beautiful ideals of child life?

Let the little ones hang up their stockings on Christmas Eve. Let them believe in the dear old white-bearded man who is one of their kindest illusions, and, above all, let them be real children while they may, not miniature men and women, tired of the ideal side of life before they leave the nursery for the schoolroom.

Yes, I truly believe that the best and truest mother can with perfect justice to both her children and herself conscientiously decide to keep Santa Claus in the especial niche in which he has set enthroned for ages past.

Give up Santa Claus! Throw the good old saint out into the snow!

Put away those delicious Christmas eve dreams, when every stir in the household after dusk meant the stamp of a reindeer!

Bring up a child without the belief in the chimney and its capacity to stretch on Christmas eve!

No; a thousand times no! There's too little poetry in life now. Let the children have all of it they can get.

I wish there was a grown-up Santa Claus. I'd love to believe in him, and I would not thank any one who told me he wasn't true.

I'd listen to his sleigh bells with something very much like rapture. I'm afraid it wouldn't be for the presents, either. That isn't why the children love Santa Claus. They love him because he means that somewhere there's a great-hearted creature who is thinking of them and planning all the year through to delight them.

I want all the children I love to believe in Santa Claus, and believe in him just as long as they can. And I don't like the big boy, who's just "found out," and who can't rest till he's made every child he knows "find out," too.

Help Santa Claus and the tree and the stockings and the reindeer and every red-checked little Jack Frost. Help them all and send all the children who believe in him a merry Christmas.

### TYPES OF THE IDEAL WOMAN.

Mr. Gleason White discusses in Cassell's Family Magazine no less important a subject than the evolution of women. Mr. White approaches the matter from an artistic standpoint. There are, he remarks, several distinct aspects of beauty—beauty of form, beauty of color, beauty of wit and beauty of pathos. But the ideals embodying them have not been evolved in the above, nor in any order; nor has any one preserved its entire supremacy for long. The matchless head of Aphrodite still appears absolutely satisfying to cultured taste to-day; but when you see it translated to color, as Albert Moore often re-embodied it, then is something lost. At the best Mr. White considers the Greek and Roman types are unemotional, and do not awaken more than aesthetic rapture; for in those days even portraiture aimed to elevate the individual to a type.

He would have us go back to Reynolds in order to find the highest type of the modern ideal. Sir Joshua's portrait of Lady William Gordon caught the pathos of

the Madonna ideal with the intelligence that has become the woman's share. In the Botticelli virgins, or the Raphael, a sweet forgiveness is absolute; in the types of Reynolds and Gainsborough to this charm are added a sense of justice and a distinct substratum of wit and vivacity. In short, "the lady" has been evolved, not the saint nor the chaste, the ministering angel or the blue stocking, but the true woman who can be all these.

## Religious Significance of Christmas.

WHILE you, mothers, are thinking what gifts you will be able to give to your children at this Christmas time, I want to tell you of a gift that has been prepared for you, and it is called "the promise of the Father."

I remember going in to see a young girl one Christmas morning in a parish of my husband in the long ago—the daughter of one of the influential men of the church—and I found my young friend in bed, for she had been quite ill with a trouble of the lungs. Her face was radiant.

I said: "Well, there is no mistake but you have had your Christmas gift."

She said: "Oh, indeed I have."

"What is it?" I asked. And her answer was: "A promise of my father that I may go to Florida this winter."

"Oh," she said, "only think of being in the open air in a warm climate, and there I am so sure I shall get well."

And that girl's Christmas that made her so supremely happy was a promise from her father, and yet that father might have died and not have been able to keep his promise. And our Father has given us a promise, and Christ called it "the promise of the Father." If we only had the faith that that young girl had in her earthly father, how we should rejoice in even the promise. We should imagine all it would be to us when in possession.

Now, what is "the promise of the Father?" It is the gift that Jesus said He would send if He went away, and you know He went away. "But if I go," He said, "I will send this gift that is called 'the promise of the Father.'"

I wish you would take in those few words, "I will send." How many at this time will get letters saying, "I will send." And then the letters will tell what will be sent, and maybe it will only be "You will receive a box from me." "I will send" one. But from the time that you get the word that something is coming because of the word "I will send," from that time you are on the lookout for its arrival.

Now, Christ said "I am going away," but "I will send" the comforter, the gift of the Holy Ghost, and for ten days those early disciples looked for the gift, saying to each other:

"Well, it will come, for you know He said 'I will send.'"

And on the tenth day He came—the other comforter that was to take the place of Jesus.

Now, this is the gift that you, mothers, need at this Christmas time more than you need any other gift—more than your children need any other gift.

The gift of the Holy Spirit.

But perhaps you say "I have the Holy Spirit. How could I get along at all without Him?"

Ah, but the early disciples had the Spirit when Jesus told them to wait for the gift. They had the Spirit, but they were not filled with the Spirit. Did you ever say of one of your children, "Well, he or she acts as if possessed?" But you do not mean as if the Holy Spirit possessed the child, but as if an evil spirit possessed her. Well, you need to be possessed by the Holy Spirit. It is not enough to possess the Spirit. You need to be possessed—something uncommon. Don't you know when you speak of a child being possessed you are apt to add: "She is not in the habit of acting that way—she seems possessed." Well, you need something unusual, so that the children will say: "Did you ever see mother look so lonely? Did you ever see her so tender and pitiful? Why, it almost makes me cry. Sometimes I think she is getting ready for heaven." Why, your mother is possessed by the Holy Spirit. And she has heaven in her, which is better sometimes than going to heaven.

There are so many good people there now that we want some heavenly people down here. Now, this is the gift I want you, mothers, to receive at this Christmas time. And you can have Him, for all He asks is that you will "receive" Him. And you need Him.

A mother said to me some time ago: "Well, I have gotten rid of a very heavy burden I have been carrying." And then she told me about her eldest daughter—a girl with a tremendous will, which she took from her father.

The mother was gentle, the daughter the very opposite. She had an imperious nature.

The mother said to me: "I cannot tell you what a time I had with M— She would simply ride over me. I could not control her. So at last I went to my room and I said:

"Dear Holy Spirit, I cannot control my child. She rides over me. I have come to put her into your hands entirely. And I am going to do so that I shall not have another care about her."

And she did it. That mother had received the Holy Spirit as a gift from God for herself. And in giving that child of hers to the Holy Spirit the child was saved.

In less than three months she was born of the Spirit. If we could only see deep enough we should see that for this Christ was born.

We say every time we repeat the creed: "He was conceived by the Holy Ghost."

And all His life was filled with the Spirit, and all He did He did by the power of the Holy Spirit. And then we are told to act like Christ. How can we act like Christ if the Holy Spirit is not in us?

Now, will you receive the Holy Ghost? Your Father in Heaven is more willing to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him than parents are to give good gifts to their children.

*Margaret Bottome*